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**JOINT NEWS CONFERENCE WITH PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON
AND BRITISH PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR
THE WHITE HOUSE, THE EAST ROOM WASHINGTON, DC 11:07 A.M. EST
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1998**

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Good morning. Please be seated.

First, let me say that it's been a real pleasure to welcome my friend Prime Minister Blair here to Washington, with the entire British entourage. It continues the great tradition of partnership between our nations, anchored by common values, driven by common vision, eager to meet the challenges of this new age.

Today we pay tribute to that heritage with a visit to the FDR memorial. Earlier in this century President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill led the community of free nations that prevailed in world war. Now, on the eve of the 21st century, the prime minister and I seek to shape the peace in a world that is rich with possibility and promise, but still not free from risk.

We have a very similar outlook on preparing our own countries for the future. And if I might just take a moment to talk about the latest economic news, the strategy we are both working is to prepare all our people for the Information Age and a global economy.

Today we have new evidence that that strategy is working here. In the last month America had 358,000 new jobs, over a million in the last three months.

We're approaching 15 million new jobs in the last five years with the lowest unemployment in 24 years. Wages are rising, inflation is low, the role of government has changed. We have the smallest percentage of these new jobs in the public sector and the highest percentage in the private sector, in the United States since the 1920s. By maintaining fiscal discipline, opening more markets, investing more in our people, we will continue to expand opportunity and promote prosperity.

We also share a common view of the changes that are occurring in the world and a belief in the importance of working together to harness them to the benefit of our people. We've reviewed our progress in building an undivided Europe; welcoming Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland into NATO; forging strong relations with the new democracies there, including Russia and Ukraine; helping the parties in Bosnia to fulfill the requirements of the Dayton peace accord.

Both our nations agree we should take part in a follow-on security presence when the SFOR mission ends in Bosnia in June. We reaffirmed our determination to combat modern cross-border threats like terrorism and the spread of the weapons of mass destruction.

On Iraq, we stand together. Saddam Hussein must know that we are

determined to prevent him from threatening his neighbors and the world with weapons of mass destruction. The prime minister and I would both prefer a genuine diplomatic solution. The best way to stop Saddam from developing an arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the missiles to deliver them, is to get the inspectors back to work with full and free access to all relevant sites. But let me be clear. If Saddam does not comply with the unanimous will of the international community, we must be prepared to act -- and we are.

On Libya, 10 years later, we haven't forgotten the victims of the bombing of Pan Am 103 in the skies over Lockerbie, Scotland, or their loved one. We will not rest until Libya complies with the requirements of the world community and surrenders for trial in the United States or Scotland, the two Libyans accused of that brutal crime.

We addressed our commitment to advance the cause of peace, and I welcome Britain's efforts as president of the European Union to spur greater cooperation in the Middle East peace process.

I also commend the prime minister for his courageous steps in cooperation with the Irish government to promote a climate of confidence and hope in Northern Ireland. The multi-party talks provide the best chance for a real solution to that conflict. I urge all the parties to show the vision and the forbearance and the determination to succeed.

I unequivocally condemn this recent sectarian killings and beatings and threats. Nothing worth having in Northern Ireland can be accomplished through violence. I told the prime minister that we will continue to do all we can to advance the cause of peace. And, of course, I asked for and received his advice in that regard.

The recent financial crisis in Asia demands action from the international community. On our increasingly interconnected planet, trouble in the far end of town can easily become a plague in our own neighborhood. We agree that every affected nation must take responsibility for implementing tough reforms, and that other nations, when they do that, when those nations that are affected do their part, other nations should support helping them through the International Monetary Fund.

We also looked at ways that we could work together to benefit our people at home. As president of both the European Union and the G-7, the United Kingdom will host two important summits in Birmingham this May. The prime minister told me he wants to take these summits to take action that really will make a difference in our people's daily lives, that lift their horizons and their dreams, stepping up our efforts to combat drug traffickers and helping every child to grow up in a safe community.

Shielding our planet from the threat of global warming and

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bringing our people the benefits of a growing economy and a clean environment are important to us as well.

It's also important that we give our people the tools to make the most of their lives through world-class education and training, help people to move from welfare to work -- and I applaud the efforts that the prime minister is making on that -- give them access to the wonders of the Information Age -- that's something we talked about yesterday at the Montgomery Blair High School in Maryland -- and dealing with the question of how to provide greater security in the retirement years when the baby boom generation retires.

We finally know that our two nations must continue to work and to lead the world, for security, prosperity, and peace.

In 1942, in the midst of the Second World War, President Roosevelt sent a message to Mr. Churchill, which said as follows: "When victory comes, we shall stand shoulder to shoulder in seeking to nourish the great ideals for which we fight."

Today, on the verge of a new century and a new millennium, that prediction has proved right. America is proud to stand with the United Kingdom and with Europe, and to work with its leader, Prime Minister Tony Blair, to build an even brighter future.

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. The floor is yours.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Thank you, Mr. President. And can I begin by saying how grateful we have been for such a wonderful and warm welcome here in the United States of America.

As the president has just indicated, we discussed, obviously, a range of different topics. At the top of the list, of course, was the situation in respect of Iraq. And what we agreed was that we had to do three things in particular. We have, first of all, to make sure that our own public opinion was properly educated as to why it is so essential that the U.N. inspectors are able to do their work, the amount of weapons that they have already uncovered in the six or seven years that they have been doing this task, and why it is therefore absolutely essential that Saddam Hussein is brought back into line with U.N. Security Council resolutions and the inspectors can go about their task unhindered.

We ourselves a couple of days ago in Britain published a document where we listed precisely all the various weapon finds the inspectors have made.

And when you go through that list and see all of the various attempts there have been, to try and prevent the inspectors' carrying out their functions, then I think people can understand why it is so necessary, so important for us to be prepared to take whatever action is necessary to ensure those inspectors can go back in and fulfill their task.

Secondly, though, in relation to Iraq, it is important that we stress, all the time, of course we want a diplomatic solution. But it must be a diplomatic solution based on, and fully consistent with, the principles that we have set out.

The question of whether there is such a diplomatic solution rests ultimately with Saddam Hussein. He has the choice. He can bring himself back into compliance with the agreements he entered into, and then that diplomatic solution can be fulfilled.

Thirdly, however, we have, of course, to prepare in case diplomacy cannot work. In view of the situation, we in Britain have been looking at our own military readiness, in case a diplomatic solution does not, in the end, prove possible.

We have decided to base eight Tornado GR-1 aircraft in Kuwait, with the full agreement of the government of Kuwait. These are ground attack and reconnaissance aircraft. Their deployment is a precautionary measure, and it will take place over the next few days.

So, all the way through, in respect of Iraq, we have agreed that we must educate, we must engage in diplomacy, but we also must prepare.

In respect of Ireland, I want to place on record yet again my thanks to the president for all the support he has given us in searching for a lasting and peaceful political settlement in Ireland. As I've found when I've addressed many members of Congress and the Senate here in Washington, there is tremendous interest in the United States of America in this process. And there is a great, much-appreciated willingness on your part to have that process succeed.

It isn't going to be easy; these things never are. But we do believe that we have the best chance that we have had for many generations to secure peace. And I wanted to emphasize yet again to you our total and complete determination and commitment to find a peaceful way through. With goodwill and with proper cooperation and with some trust on all sides, I think it is possible.

And I thank the president for his condemnation of those sectarian killings that have so disfigured the process over the past few weeks. And I say, yet again, what we must ensure is that those random, brutal, unjustified acts of violence perpetrated by a small minority, must not in the end, frustrate the wishes of the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland to secure a peaceful and stable future for themselves.

We discussed, of course, the Middle East peace process, and Bosnia and our commitment there. We discussed as the president has mentioned a moment ago, the global economy, the Asian crisis, and what measures we should take in order to ensure that such crises are mitigated and do not happen again.

We also laid out for the president and his colleagues, our strategy as president of the European Union; our commitment to ensure the monetary union is successfully launched; our commitment to the enlargement process, bringing into the European Union those countries in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. And we discussed as well, and agree, that it was important that Europe strengthened its relationship with Turkey and that we build a strong relationship with Turkey; between Turkey and the European Union for the future.

As good and interesting as anything else has been also the possibility of exchanging ideas, ideas about how government meets the economic and social and political challenges of the future.

As I said in my speech this morning at the breakfast hosted by the vice president, there is a new Britain being shaped today. It is a Britain of confidence, dynamism. It is a Britain that is proud of its past but is not living in it, and is shaping a future of which we can be proud also. And I think in exchanging ideas, and in seeing how much there are common themes and common ideas for government between us, we can gain strength in Britain and United States from that partnership and relationship.

And finally, I would like to say, personally, how tremendously grateful I have been, as I say not merely for the warmth of the welcome extended to us here, but for the great comradeship and partnership between the United States of America and Great Britain that I know will strengthen and strengthen evermore in the future.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Now, here's what we're going to do, we're going to alternate, and so I'll call on an American journalist and the prime minister will call on a British journalist. Of course you're free to ask whomever whatever you please.

Helen?

Q Mr. President, despite the ongoing investigation, you felt no constraint in saying what your relationship with Monica Lewinsky is not -- was not. So it seems, by logic, that you ought to be able to say here and now what was your relationship? Her lawyer says -- called it "colleagues." Is that an apt description?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, let me first of all say, once again, I never asked anybody to do anything but tell the truth. I know about the stories today. I was pleased that Ms. Currie's lawyers stated

unambiguously this morning -- unambiguously -- that she's not aware of any unethical conduct.

But this investigation is going on and you know what the rules for it are. And I just think as long as it's going on, I should not comment on the specific questions because one -- there's one, then there's another, then there's another. It's better to let the investigation go on and have me do my job and focus on my public responsibilities and let this thing play out its course. That's what I think I should do, and that's what I intend to do.

Q You are leaving people in the dark.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, I'm honoring the rules of the investigation, and if someone else is leaking, unlawfully, out of the grand jury proceeding, that's a different story. I am going to do -- I have told the American people what I think is essential for them to know about this and what I believe they want to know. What I'm doing is going on with my work and cooperating with the investigation. And I do not believe I should answer specific questions. I don't think that's the right thing to do now.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Michael?

Q Michael Brownson of ITN in London. Is it not time, though, to drop the pretense that this is simply business as usual? Have we not seen, with the allegations that surrounding the British foreign secretary, but to a much greater degree yourself, Mr. President, that this does affect the conduct of public business?

And far from dodging the point as you did, Prime Minister, yesterday when you were asked about the private lives of public figures, should you not both be saying that the public have the right to expect the very highest standard in the private lives of public politicians?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Well, Michael, I hope we do that. But what I would say to you is that what is essential is that we focus on the issues that we were elected to focus upon. And in the discussions that we have had over this past two days, we have been focusing on issues like Iraq, where we are considering, if diplomatic solutions fail, taking military action; we've been focusing on the peace process in Northern Ireland, that gives a chance for the first time in generations, after centuries of conflict, for people to find a way through; we've been focusing on the problems of the world economy that, if they're not tackled, could have a serious impact on the living standards of people here and people in Britain, as well as

people out in Asia.

These are the important questions for me, schools, hospitals, crime, living standards, jobs that people want us to focus upon. And I believe that it is absolutely essential that we stay focused upon those things and that we deliver for our people what we were elected to deliver.

Now, that is what I intend to do. And I think that that is, in the end, what the British people would expect me to do.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Terry?

Q Mr. President, switching to Iraq, the prime minister said that you had to educate the public about Iraq; but I think the American public is largely in the dark about what to expect about a military attack on Iraq. Are you talking about something that lasts a day or two, or something that lasts for weeks or months?

And on a diplomatic note, you've got France and China and Russia opposing this. Boris Yeltsin says that it could lead to World War III. What gives Britain and the United States the right to go it alone on this?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, you asked about five questions there in one. Let me try to unpack it.

First of all, the most important thing, the best thing that could be done, what we hope will happen, is that there will be a diplomatic solution to this which result in the inspection teams for the United Nations being able to return and have unfettered access to the appropriate sites, because, as -- the prime minister, I think, put out a paper just a couple of days ago pointing out the incredible work that's been done by the inspection teams.

That's the best thing.

Now whether there is a diplomatic solution or not is entirely up to Saddam Hussein. If he decides that he wants to continue to have the freedom to rebuild his weapons program, then I believe that the clear mandate for the world community, based on not only the resolutions of the United Nations, but the danger this would present to the interests and values of the United States, the people of Great Britain, the people of the region, is to do what we can to weaken his ability to develop those weapons of mass destruction and to visit them on his neighbors.

You know, I never discuss operational plans; I wouldn't do that. I think the important thing is that you know that -- that I don't want this. Nobody wants this; we want a diplomatic solution. It's up to him.

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The second thing I would say is, the secretary of state has been working hard in the last several days, has traveled, as you know, widely. I have been on the phone a lot. I believe there is -- there is more agreement than at first it appears about the necessity to push this thing through to the end. And I will continue to talk with the -- with President Yeltsin, President Chirac, and others.

But consider the alternative. After all, this man is the only repeat offender around with chemical weapons. He used them on his own people. He used them on the Iranians. And I believe it's a very serious thing. And I think that the American people will understand that.

Q ("World war," said ?) President Yeltsin --

PRESIDENT CLINTON: I just -- I don't understand what chain of circumstances would lead to that development. I don't believe that will happen.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Peter?

Q Peter Riddle (sp), the Times. On Iraq, you've said the need was to educate, Prime Minister. But it isn't entirely clear what the objective of military action would be. Is it intended to be a punishment for Saddam Hussein? Is it intended as a substitute for the work of the weapons inspectors, destroyed? Or would it continue until Saddam said: "Right. I'll let them in"?

And also, you've announced the deployment of some aircraft. Is there any intention to deploy ground troops at all, British ground troops?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: No. The deployment that we have made is the deployment that I have described, of the aircraft.

And with respect to the objectives; well, the objectives are very clear; that is, to ensure either that the weapon inspectors can come in and finish their task or that the capability that Saddam Hussein undoubtedly has and wants to develop for weapons of mass destruction, is taken out. And it is absolutely essential that what we do is focused upon the best way possible that we can do that.

Now obviously, as the president was saying a moment or two ago, it is not sensible or serious to start discussing the details of the military options available to us. But the purpose of this the whole way through, the reason we are in this situation, is because he has been developing weapons of mass destruction. The only barrier to that has been the inspectors. If the inspectors are prevented from doing

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their work, then we have to make sure, by the military means of which we are capable, that insofar as possible, that capacity ceases.

And that's the objective, and it's an objective that I think is fully in line, as I say, with the original agreements under which Saddam Hussein undertook -- I mean, remember, he agreed, he undertook, to destroy any weapons-of-mass-destruction capability, whether nuclear, chemical or biological. Now, he is in breach of that. And we've got to make sure that he complies, one way or another, with it.

STAFF (?): (American ?).

Q Mr. President, just to go back to the controversy that's been surrounding you lately; there have been various reports that in some ways, have come to be accepted as fact. And I just want to give you an opportunity.

One of them is that, in sworn testimony to the lawyers for Paula Jones, that you changed your version of your relationship with Gennifer Flowers. And I just wondered if you can tell us -- I mean, do you now --

PRESIDENT CLINTON: I can tell you, but let me just say this. Again, even though the judge's order has been routinely violated by the other side in the case -- the judge has issued strict orders in the case for -- for -- that covers everybody, including me, not to discuss it.

I can tell you this -- and I'm confident as this thing plays out it will become more apparent in the future -- if you go back -- I told the truth in my deposition with regard to that issue, and I also did in 1992 when I did the interview, which I think was rerun the other night, the interview that Hillary and I did on "60 Minutes." And you just have to know that, and that I think it will be -- become apparent, as this case plays itself out, that I did in fact do that.

But I am not going to discuss that. The judge has given us strict orders not to discuss anything related to that case. The other side has violated it on a regular basis. I don't intend to do that. I'm just not going to do it.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: John?

Q John -- (last name, affiliation off mike). Prime Minister, Mr. President, is it possible for you to launch an attack if you don't have on board the French, the Russians, the Chinese?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: I think, John, you have to distinguish very carefully between what, of course I accept, varying degrees of

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enthusiasm or commitment for the military option, with the complete unanimity there is in the world community that Saddam Hussein has to comply with the resolutions, and that his capacity to develop weapons of mass destruction must be halted.

Now, it is difficult for us to see, and for me to see, quite frankly, that if you take that as the position, how diplomacy, unless it is backed up at least by the threat of force, is ever going to work and succeed.

But it would be wrong, I think, to think that either our -- for example, our French or our Russian colleagues were not absolutely insistent that Saddam Hussein comply with these resolutions, and they are making diplomatic efforts in order to ensure that that happens. I wish those efforts well, provided they are fully consistent with the principles that have been set out.

It is just that we take the view, and I think experience teaches us that this is the only realistic view of Saddam Hussein, that unless you back up whatever diplomatic initiatives you're taking with saying quite clearly, well, if diplomacy doesn't work, the option of force is there, then those diplomatic initiatives are unlikely to succeed. But it's important that we realize that it is in that area that any difference lies, not in the insistence of the world community that he must come into line with those U.N. resolutions.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Peter?

Q Mr. President, your spokesman this morning described to us, in his words, a very dangerous environment following these alleged leaks. What's your own assessment of the legal atmosphere? And we understand that your attorneys are planning to take some action about this. What action do they intend to take?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: I think you should talk to them. I don't want to comment on what they're going to do. They're fully capable of speaking for themselves, and for me in this case.

Q And your comment, sir, on the effect of the leaks?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: I don't have anything to add to what has already been said about that.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Phil.

Q I'm Phil Murphy from the Press Association. Could I ask the prime minister, you could have come here and simply talked about serious politics, but some people have been struck by the warmth of

the personal statements of support that you've given to the president. Could I ask you -- I mean, have you ever considered that that might be a politically risky strategy?

Could I ask the president, have you appreciated those comments from Mr. Blair?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: To be quite honest, Phil, I mean I've said it because I believed it and because I think it is the right thing to do. And I've worked with President Clinton now for some nine months as British prime minister. I have found him throughout someone I could trust, someone I could rely upon, someone I am proud to call not just a colleague but a friend.

And in the end, you either decide in politics, when you're asked about people, you're going to say how you actually feel or you're going to make a whole series of calculations. And my belief is that the right thing to say is what you feel. And I happen to think -- I don't know whether it's my place to say it or not -- that if you look at the American economy, you look at the respect with which America is held right 'round the world today, if you look at the standing and authority of the president, it's a pretty impressive record for anyone.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: You ask, do I appreciate it? No, I -- (laughter). He should have come here and jumped all over me, I mean -- (laughter).

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Do you want me to come back in now? (Laughter).

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Of course I do. But, you know, I -- I think it's also a testament about the -- there's been a lot of -- a lot of people bandy about the word "character," and sometimes in loose and uncertain contexts. I think the people who -- who stand up and say things that they believe when it would be just as easy to walk away show a certain kind of character that I think is essential in a public leader, and I'm very gratified that -- that Tony Blair has done that. Not only for personal reasons, but because I think it -- it will strengthen his authority as a world leader.

Q Mr. President?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Yes, go ahead?

Q Mr. President, all these questions about your personal life

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have to be painful to you and your family. At what point do you consider that it's just not worth it, and you consider resigning from office? (Mild laughter.)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: *Never.* You know, I was elected to do a job. I think the American people know two or three things about me now that they didn't know the first time this kind of effort was made against me. They -- I think they know that I care very much about them, that I care about ordinary people whose voices aren't often heard here. And I think they know I have worked very, very hard for them.

And I think they know now, more often than not, the ideas I had and the things I fought for turned out to be right in terms of the consequences to the American people. I think they know all that. And I'm just going to keep showing up for work. I'm going to do what I was hired to do, and I'm going to try to keep getting good results for them.

The pain threshold, at least for our side, being in public today has been raised. But to give in to that would be to give in to everything that I fought against and that got me into this race in 1991 to try to run for president in the first place. I have tried to bring an end to this sort of thing in our public life. I've tried to bring the American people together. I've tried to de-personalize politics and take the venom out of it. And the harder I've tried to do it, the harder others have pulled in the other direction. That doesn't mean I'm wrong. And I would -- I would -- I would never walk away from the people of this country and the trust they placed in me.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Robert?

Q Sir, Robert -- (last name inaudible) -- from the National Times. Prime Minister, this morning you said that the U.K. faced two painful years. Could you expand on what you meant by that?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Yes. I mean, as I was saying to people this morning, I mean, there are some very tough decisions that we have had to take in order to deal both with the structural budget deficit, with the inflation that was back in the system that we inherited when we came to power, and with an education and welfare system that, frankly, is just nowhere near where it needs to be for the 21st century. And making those changes is going to be tough. Welfare reform isn't going to be easy; it will be unpopular in certain quarters. Taking the measures to cure the budget deficit has been hard. When people want more money spent on more public services, we're saying, look, we can't go on with ever-higher debt levels and

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borrowing. We've got to act.

So we've taken the action on interest rates and giving the Bank of England independence. We've cut the structural deficit. A balanced budget is something we'll be able to talk about on the other side of the water as well, in a few years time. We're putting through a massive program of reform on education and welfare, but it will be tough, and it will take us some time to get it through.

But as I said this morning, I am an unashamed long-termist.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: (Chuckles.)

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: I believe in making sure that the decisions that we take aren't based on the next day's headlines, but are based on where we really want the country to be some years down the line.

And particularly when we're facing such enormous global economic challenges, we can't afford either to lose a grip on monetary or fiscal prudence, or to leave our education and welfare system in the state they're in.

So yes, it'll be tough. But it'll be worth it in the end.

<u> PRESIDENT CLINTON:</u> Well, if I -- let me just me just make one comment to support something the prime minister just said -- when he said he was an unashamed long-termist. In a funny way, when societies change as fast and as much as our societies are changing today, when the -- the pace of events and their variety make it more difficult to predict what will happen next week or next month, it is even more important to be oriented toward the long term, because you have to figure that if you lay in a structure of opportunity and -- for a free people, they'll get it right, and they'll overcome all these unpredictable developments in the meanwhile. And I think that -- that's why I think the approach that he has taken is so wise and so right, not only for Great Britain, but for any other country as well.

(Cross talk.) Yes, Mara? Go ahead.

Q I'm wondering if you could elaborate on something that the first lady said recently about a right-wing conspiracy who's working against you. Could you explain how that conspiracy works? And specifically, are Linda Tripp, Ken Starr, and Monica Lewinsky part of that conspiracy?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Now you know I've known her a long time -- the first lady -- and she's very smart. And she's hardly ever wrong about anything. (Laughter.) But I don't believe I should amplify on

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her observation in this case. (Scattered laughter.)

Q Do you agree with that?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Yeah, Adam?

Q Adam -- (last name off mike). One of your common shared themes you keep on telling your voters is this matter of their rights go with responsibilities. Now you, as elected leaders, have extraordinary rights and privileges. Yet you seem to be saying that there's no extension of responsibilities as far as personal integrity is concerned. Is that what you're really saying? If you're delivering on the job, the big picture, it doesn't matter what you get up to in your private lives?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Nobody is saying that you don't have obligations of personal integrity. Of course, that's right. But what we are trying to say to you is the responsibilities with which we were asked by our people to discharge, those responsibilities are on the issues that -- where we can affect them as leaders of the country.

And if you go to Britain today and you talk to the British people -- and I do ask -- it just could be that sometimes you guys in the media are not in exactly the same place as a lot of public opinion in terms of the priorities people have. But if you go out there and you talk to British people and you say, "What do you want this new Labour government to do?" they will talk to you about ensuring we don't have boom and bust but that we have steadily rising living standards. They'll talk about job security. They'll talk about the state of their schools. You know, they'll talk about the national health service. They'll talk about the welfare system and the crime in their streets. They'll talk about security and old age. They will talk about these things, and they will care about these things. And they will expect us to deliver those responsibilities.

And of course, it's a great privilege for us to occupy the positions that we do. But in the end, the judgment that the people make of us is a judgment based on what we said that we would do and whether we fulfilled the promises that we made, and that's certainly what we intend to do. And I do think, also, that people understand and want political leadership that addresses these fundamental questions in a way that means something to them.

And when I was at the Montgomery Blair High School yesterday with the president and the president got up and addressed the young men and women, and the teachers and staff and parents that were there, and started going through the education program that he was unveiling, and it formed part of the State of the Union address and everything; and

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some of those things in terms of class sizes and new technology in the schools that (are ?) very familiar to the British contingent here as things we're trying to do in Britain; I mean, the enthusiasm and the delight with which those things were greeted, because those people knew that in the end, that's what they elected their president to do. That's what they elected me to do; and that those are things that they want from us. And we've got to make sure all the time, that we're focusing on that big picture.

And you know, whatever other issues come along and distract us, in the end the judgment of history upon us will be pretty poor if those weren't the things that, when we got to bed at night, we're thinking about.

Those weren't the things that we're worried about and concerned about throughout the entirety of our society. Because those are the things which really make a difference to their lives.

Q Mr. President?

Q Mr. Prime Minister?

Q Sir?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Go ahead.

STAFF: Let's make this the last round.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Go ahead.

Q Mr. President, Monica Lewinsky's life has been changed forever -- her family's life has been changed forever. I wonder how you feel about that, and what, if anything, you'd like to say to Monica Lewinsky at this minute?

(Mild laughter.)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: That's good. (Laughter.) That's good, but at this minute I'm going to stick with my position -- I'm not commenting.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR (?): Yes?

Q While relations between Britain and the United States appear to be splendid right now, there's a darkening cloud over relations with Italy. The prime minister, the president, the defense

minister has issued some very harsh statements about the accident the other day when a low-flying Marine plane severed a cable and the car fell. There's a lot of anger; some people in Italy are even asking for the closing of the Aviano base. What do you have to say to them?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, first of all, what happened was horrible. And when I heard about it I was very shaken, and I -- I, as you know, there were -- there was a period of a few hours there where it wasn't clear how many people had died, and where there was another whole gondola suspended, where many more people could have died and, thank God, they were rescued. And the whole thing has been an agony for the people of Italy, and there were large -- a substantial number of Germans killed, and I'm sure, for the pilot of the plane and the people in our military base in Aviano, where I have been on more than one occasion.

I can tell you what I think should be done. I called Prime Minister Prodi and I told him that I was heart sick about it; that I would make absolutely sure there was a no holds barred, full investigation on what happened; that the Italians would be kept fully informed and be a part of it; and that we would work with them in every way possible to make sure that they knew that we tried to get to the bottom of it and to handle it in the appropriate way.

You know, in our military every year -- I say this to the American people all the time, but let me -- let me just say this. It is an inherently dangerous business. Now, we don't know what the facts are. Maybe somebody made a careless mistake, we don't know. I do not know what the facts are, and I will not render judgment until I do. But we lose about 200 people every year in military service in America on training exercise or otherwise on duty. And those planes fly very fast. And I don't know what the description of the mission was; I want to wait until I see exactly what the facts are, but it is inherently more dangerous than I think we think from time to time.

Now, I told the prime minister of Italy, and I'll tell you, I will do everything I can to find out exactly what happened and to take appropriate action and to satisfy the people of Italy that we have done the right thing. I understand why they are hurt and heartbroken and angry, and they are entitled to answers and we'll try to give them to them.

Q Mr. President?

STAFF: Thank you. Last question.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Now, go ahead, the gentleman in the back. I promised one more. Last question.

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Go ahead.

Q Mr. President, do you believe that airstrikes alone are going to remove the threat of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons from Saddam Hussein? Is that a fair thing to expect from military action, should push come to shove in the Gulf?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, there have been many thoughtful public pieces, a lot of very thoughtful articles which have been written about the limits, as well as the possibilities of any kind of military action.

I think the precise question should be -- that I should have to ask and answer -- is, could any military action, if all else fails, substantially reduce or delay Saddam Hussein's capacity to develop weapons of mass destruction and to deliver them on his neighbors? The answer to that, I am convinced, is yes. I'm convinced there is a yes answer there. But you have to understand that those are the criteria for me.

I've told you before, I don't believe we need to re-fight the Gulf War. It's history. It happened. That's the way it is. I don't believe we need to get into a direct war with Iraq over the leadership of the country. Do I think the country would be better served if it had a different leader? Of course I do. That's not the issue. The issue is that very sharp question.

If the inspection regime is dead, and therefore we cannot continue to make progress on getting the stuff out of there in the first place, and then -- keep in mind there are two things about this regime. There's the progress in getting the stuff out of there in the first place, and then there is the monitoring system, which enables people on a regular basis to go back to high-probability sites to make sure nothing is happening to rebuild it. So, if that is dead, is there an option which would permit us to reduce and/or delay his capacity to bring those weapons up and to deliver them? That is -- I think the answer to that is yes, there is an option that would permit that.

Q Mr. President, as a follow-on to that --

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Do you want to ask one more question?

Q Mr. President, as a follow-up to that, please? Mr. President, as a follow-up to that please?

Q Prime Minister, as a man who understands the pressures of public life, and also a friend, and a religious man, I wonder what

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words of advice and support and comfort and sympathy you might have been able to offer personally to the president during these difficult times when he's under investigation.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: That's what in the British media is called "a helpful question." (Laughter.)

(Chuckles.) If I can -- I don't presume to give advice at all. All I think that is important, which is what we've managed to do, is to discuss the issues that we've set out and listed for you. And as I say, I think we'd be pretty much failing in our duty if we weren't to do that.

And I've actually noticed, since I've been here and I've talked to many people here, that there is of course huge concern at the moment on what is happening in Iraq, this huge interest in Britain, in the new government, and in what we're trying to do in Northern Ireland. And you know, I think the best thing is for us to concentrate upon those issues for the very reasons I've given -- that that's what we were elected to do. And that's what I intend to do. That's what President Clinton is doing, and I think he's quite right.

Q One more, sir? (Cross talk.)

PRESIDENT CLINTON Thank you.